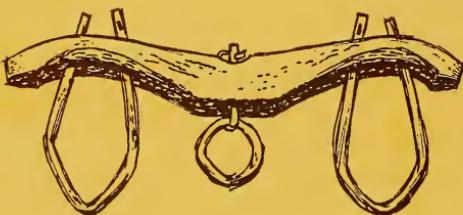


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The Lincoln heritage in the
Cumberlands.

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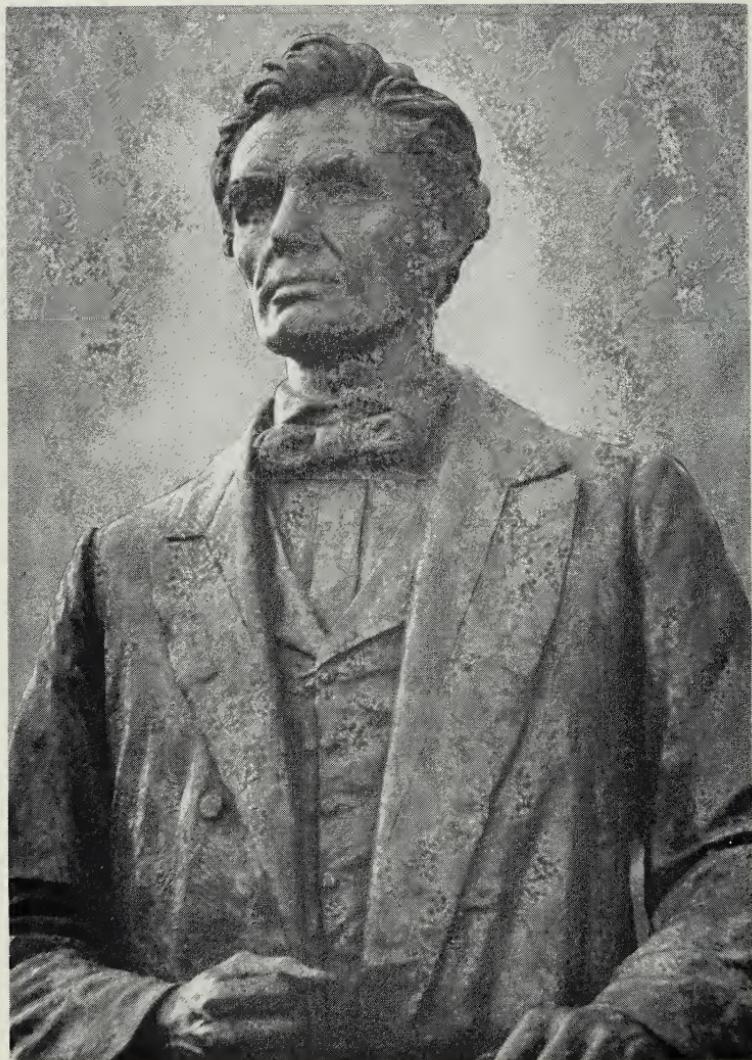


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The
LINCOLN HERITAGE
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“LINCOLN THE LAWYER”

Statue by C. S. PAOLO
on Campus of Lincoln Memorial University

The
LINCOLN HERITAGE
in the
CUMBERLANDS

By

ROBERT L. KINCAID

President of Lincoln Memorial University

An Address Delivered before the
Lincoln Fellowship of Southern California
at Los Angeles, California
October 20, 1950

With a Foreword

By

RALPH G. LINDSTROM

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Foreword

Of memorials to Abraham Lincoln there is an increasing number. Many are tremulously beautiful — veritable poems in bronze, marble, or other durable material which lends itself to the artistry of sculptor, architect, or builder.

It is well that this is so. But if memorializing be confined to things of lifeless beauty, we but embalm our Lincoln as one dead in a dead past. We need a living Lincoln.

A living Lincoln, alive in the heart and mind of America, is prerequisite to his immortality as to us. "Man's vast future" in "the Great Republic"—which is "the last, best hope of earth"—will be lost unless the living memorial of such a civic life and purpose be made the continuing (because emulating) life of Americans of each succeeding generation.

Such is the message of this brochure. Such is the purpose of Lincoln Memorial University. Such is the work of Robert Lee Kincaid and his associates in perpetuating the ideals of the immortal Lincoln.

RALPH G. LINDSTROM

11 Dec. 59 J. Wagner Temple

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HE INFLUENCE of the life of Abraham Lincoln is world-wide. His name is a symbol of hope and inspiration for all mankind. His credo of liberty and opportunity is spoken in every tongue. His philosophy is based on enduring truth, so often assailed by false doctrine in the painful advance of civilization. His personal example and achievements lift the hearts and aspirations of all who work to improve their stations in life. What he lived for, what he accomplished, what he left to the world, have become the heritage of all peoples, even to the remotest parts of the earth.

I am made more conscious of the importance of this Lincoln heritage, the longer I am associated with an institution which memorializes his life in the service of youth. Recently this was evidenced by a young Chinese student who enrolled with us. The young man was a graduate of the University of Chungking who had come to America two years ago to seek further training in the sciences. He came out of China before his country was over-run by the Communists. As a young Christian, he had looked to this country as a land of greater opportunity.

I asked this young man why he had come to a small college, located so far from the metropolitan centers. He told me that Abraham Lincoln had always been his ideal. After coming to America and enrolling in another institution, he began to look around for a place where the life of Lincoln was especially emphasized. Learning of Lincoln Memorial University, he decided that he wanted to attach himself to our institution where he might have the benefit and inspiration of intimate Lincoln contacts. He is now happily located in our college where an intangible spirit and influence are touching his life and character.

This student from the Far East illustrates the universality of one of the world's greatest leaders. It brings to us, in the heart of the Southern hills, a new appreciation of our own Lincoln heritage. It is that particular heritage which I wish to discuss.

Abraham Lincoln never saw Cumberland Gap, the historic pass-way which led from the East into the new West, where he was born,

grew to manhood, and rose to national political leadership. He was never in the broad Southern highland belt which separated the colonial civilization of the Eastern seaboard from the vast empire of the undeveloped Mississippi Valley. But his ancestral roots were there. People of his kind had populated the region. Sturdy stock of freedom-seeking English, Scotch-Irish, Huguenot, and German descent had spread out along the Wilderness Road which passed through the highland regions of Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky.

This hardy race which pushed into the western country was typified by Capt. Abraham Lincoln who left his home in the "Great Valley of Virginia" after the Revolution, to cross the Appalachians to build a home on the Kentucky frontier. Little Tom Lincoln grew to manhood on this frontier, and Nancy Hanks was also a child of the wilderness. Their son, born in the midst of the poverty and hardships of western life, grew to greatness under these conditions. Like a mighty oak in a primeval forest, he became a figure of majestic grandeur in the new country which the early settlers had won for an expanding nation.

It was natural, therefore, for Abraham Lincoln to have a deep affection for the people of this section of the South. One of them in spirit and background, he turned to them instinctively when he needed their support. He knew their hopes and aspirations, and he was confident of their loyalty and devotion when the testing time came. He was perhaps thinking of this when, as the President-elect, he received delegates to the Peace Convention in Washington, at Willard's Hotel, on February 21, 1861. As the delegates were presented to him, the tall man from the prairies greeted each one with some pleasant remark. Then Felix K. Zollicoffer was introduced to him. Zollicoffer had been Congressman from Tennessee, from 1853 to 1859. A former Whig and a newspaper man of Swiss extraction, Zollicoffer was almost as tall as Lincoln. His thin face was accentuated by his trimly-cut mustache and narrow beard. Mr. Lincoln beamed jovially as he took Zollicoffer's hand, and asked: "Does liberty still thrive in the mountains of Tennessee?"

"We do not know," was Zollicoffer's reply. But the Tennessean understood what Lincoln meant. He knew that Lincoln was asking about the attitude of the mountain men whose record of loyalty and courage had been an exciting annal in American history. He knew that Lincoln was thinking of the western pioneers at King's Mountain; of the frontiersmen who turned back the Western Indians and extended the western conquest during the Revolution; of the Tennes-

seeans and Kentuckians who fought with Jackson at New Orleans; of the Bowies and Crocketts who died at the Alamo; of the restless, westward-moving pioneers who had built a nation from the wilderness. He knew that fresh in Lincoln's memory was the speech of Andrew Johnson, Democratic Senator from Tennessee, on December 19, 1860, when he made a moving and unexpected declaration of loyalty to the Union, closing with these ringing words: "Let us stand by the Constitution; and in preserving the Constitution we shall save the Union; and in saving the Union, we save the greatest government on earth."

Time and again, when evil days fell upon the land, Lincoln turned to this same question that he had asked Zollicoffer. Never did he doubt the loyalty of the people of the Southern mountains. Proudly did he note their response to the call of their country. He understood their dilemma, because the issues were confused. One thing was paramount among the people: their beloved Union was in danger and their flag had been fired upon. West Virginia broke away from the mother Commonwealth; East Tennessee tried to secede from the State which went out of the Union; Southeastern Kentucky was aflame with Union sentiment. The entire mountain belt, reaching from Western Pennsylvania to Northern Alabama, was a bulwark of Unionism where the issue of slavery was not important. This belt of loyalty in an important sector of the South had much to do with military movements on both sides, during the course of the war.

Early in the conflict, Lincoln tried to reinforce the stranded Union elements in East Tennessee. He proposed that a military railroad be built from Cincinnati to Cumberland Gap for the support of the Union forces trying to cut the Confederacy into separate segments. Failing in that, he used the old, worn-out and difficult Wilderness Road for the same purpose. However, his military leaders in the West turned to the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, flowing into the Ohio, for their major efforts, and relief for East Tennessee was postponed until September, 1863, when Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside came into the state with a new army, captured Knoxville, took Cumberland Gap from the Confederates, and opened up the supply route from Northern Kentucky to East Tennessee and other Southern points. The marches and counter-marches through the Cumberland passes, the struggle for supplies in a mountain country stripped of its food, the bushwhacking of uncontrolled guerillas on both sides, brought great suffering and despair to the mountain people, and created bitterness and misunderstandings which resulted in many family and community feuds following the war.

Lincoln was keenly aware of that condition when he called Gen. Oliver Otis Howard, commander of the Eleventh Army Corps, into his office, on September 26, 1863. General Howard had been at the Battle of Gettysburg and was attached to the Army of the Potomac. In September he was ordered to detach his Corps and go to Chattanooga to reinforce the Union forces there, under General Grant. President Lincoln desired to talk with Howard about the military situation in the South before he went to Chattanooga, and asked the General to come to Washington for an interview. It was an hour-long conference with only the two men present. In later years, General Howard was to repeat the story of that interview many times, because on it hinged an event of far-reaching consequences.

General Howard stated that President Lincoln dwelt at length upon the military situation of the South. He spoke warmly of the loyalty of the people of East Tennessee and Southeastern Kentucky. It had been his concern, since the beginning of the war, to give aid and support to the people of this great island of loyalty in the highland South.

President Lincoln went to the wall of his study and pulled down a roll map of the section. He pointed to Cumberland Gap, and said:

"This is the key to the situation. Cannot you take your army through there and go on to Knoxville to relieve General Burnside, who is in trouble? Then you can join Grant at Chattanooga."

General Howard replied that the maneuver probably would be a proper one, but suggested that Grant should give his approval, since he had recently been placed in command of the Union Armies of the West. President Lincoln readily agreed. Then he turned to General Howard with some emotion, and spoke again of the loyalty of the people in that area. The General noted a peculiar tenderness in Lincoln's eyes, as he said:

"General, if you come out of this horror and misery alive, and I pray to God that you may, I want you to do something for those mountain people who have been shut out of the world all these years. I know them. If I live I will do all I can to aid, and between us perhaps we can do the justice they deserve. Please remember this, and if God is good to us we may be able to speak of this later."

Thus the interview ended. The thought of President Lincoln was registered in the heart of General Howard. To it he would turn in later years, as a direct commission from his Commander-in-Chief.

Lincoln's tragic and untimely end came before he was able to carry out his program of rehabilitation and readjustment for the South. His particular concern for the harassed and neglected loyal elements below the Mason-Dixon line was forgotten in the backwash of hatred and disaster of reconstruction days. The people who had been so devoted to the Union and had looked to him for constructive leadership in the difficult days ahead were left distraught and disillusioned. Their affection for their matchless leader had increased during the war. At its end they regarded him with a feeling akin to veneration.

This devotion is illustrated by a remarkable incident when news of Lincoln's assassination reached a small country town in Southeastern Kentucky. It was on Monday morning, April 17, 1863, court day in Barbourville, Kentucky, which is forty miles north of where Lincoln Memorial University is now located. The people from the surrounding hills were lounging around, in the court yard, and a few were gathered in the court room. On a single military wire, put up by the Union forces to connect communities along the Wilderness Road, there was ticked out the fateful message of the assassination of President Lincoln. The announcement was carried to court officials, and immediately courtcriers called to the people outside to come into the court room for a special announcement. Then it was, that the throng of country folk from the hills and hollows of Southeastern Kentucky heard the tragic news from David L. Lyttle, an attorney, who made a short address. His tribute to Lincoln is one of the most eloquent ever uttered. He began:

"Fellow Citizens of Knox County:

"I appear before you this morning to make to you in a formal manner the awful announcement that the President of the United States has been assassinated, and that his lifeless remains now lie pale in death,—not at the base of a statue but in the Capitol of a people determined to maintain their national life and the integrity of the Union,—not muffled in a cloak, but wrapped in the flag of his country.

"Who could have thought that, at the moment when a morning so bright had just dawned and the hopes of the patriot beat so high, a night of such melancholy gloom would overspread our national sky? Brutus showed his solicitude by stabbing his friend. Rebellion has showed its folly by shooting Abraham Lincoln, whose heart was throbbing with anxiety for the moment to arrive when he could safely astonish the world by his clemency, and guild the Southern sky with an unfading bow of hope."

In closing his address, Lyttle compared Lincoln to Washington and stated that it was unfortunate that the American people did not know the goodness of Abraham Lincoln before his election to the presidency. He had led the nation through a fiery ordeal and had preserved the Union. "Had this been sufficiently understood and appreciated by the people," Lyttle said, "Lincoln's pathway to Washington City would have been strewn with flowers instead of daggers, and the nation would have been saved from its calamity and disgrace, and your little city, this day, instead of being covered with the weeds of mourning and sorrow would have been lighted with the bonfires of joy."

Following this announcement by Lyttle, appropriate resolutions were adopted, expressing the grief of the people and pledging their support to Lincoln's successor. In all the land there was no greater demonstration of affection for the gallant leader who had fallen in the hour of his triumph.

What happened at Barbourville, Kentucky, on that bleak Monday morning in April, 1865, was indicative of the sorrow in the Southern mountains as the war came to an end. Abraham Lincoln, the saviour of the Union, was gone. What would have been his immediate efforts to overcome the restrictive handicaps of the mountain people, socially, educationally, and economically, were not revealed. For two more decades they were left stranded and neglected, as the nation rose from the tragic consequences of the fratricidal strife.

But General Howard did not forget for long. His time of greatest service was yet to come. Busy for four years with the rehabilitation of 4,000,000 freedmen, and then active in Indian campaigns in the West, the one-armed Christian general continued in the military service until his retirement in 1894, at the age of 64. He had achieved enough glory on the battlefield and in humanitarian service for any one man. Surely he was entitled to the peace and quietude of pleasant retirement. He could write about his experiences; he could attend reunions of his comrades and speak occasionally of leaders whom he had known, or about battles in which he had participated. But he was soon to be reminded of his last conference with Lincoln in September, 1863.

Down in the Cumberlands was a Congregational preacher, the Rev. A. A. Myers, like a prophet of old, going about doing good. Trained at Hillsdale College, in Michigan, he had gone into the Southern mountains as a home missionary, founding churches, starting Sunday schools, and doing educational work. In his journeys, he came to

Cumberland Gap, in 1890, where a big industrial boom was in progress. Here he built a little church and started a private school in the basement. These quarters were soon inadequate for the fast-growing school. An abandoned hotel was taken over. Soon it was going as a full-fledged academy, known as the Harrow School. Myers began to enlist the interest of philanthropic people, in the North and East, in his missionary program. Learning that General Howard, who was making his home at Burlington, Vermont, was soon to make a lecture trip through the South, Myers invited the General to include Cumberland Gap in his tour, and speak to his students.

We do not know what memories were awakened in General Howard when he got off the train at Middlesboro, Kentucky, where he was met by a student from the school. In the school carriage, they crossed from Kentucky to Tennessee through the famous pass in the Cumberlands, where the scars of the Civil War were still visible. The old Union Veteran must have recalled the story of the struggle around the historic pass; the activities of Zollicoffer before he was killed at Mill Springs; the remarkable conquest of the Union General, George W. Morgan, in June, 1862, and his evacuation three months later when he was forced to withdraw; the brilliant march of General Ambrose E. Burnside from Kentucky to Knoxville, Tennessee, in August, 1863, and his investment and final capture of the Gap on September 9; and, at last, Burnside's predicament when he was surrounded at Knoxville by Confederate forces under General Longstreet.

And that must have brought General Howard again into the presence of the lonely man in the White House when Lincoln had pointed his long bony finger at Cumberland Gap and said, "General, that is the key to the situation!"

Filled with such memories, as the buggy rolled and jolted along the rough road over which contending armies had passed, General Howard came down to the little school at the foot of the pass on the Tennessee side. Here he was greeted by Brother Myers, Mrs. Myers, and two visiting guests, the Rev. F. B. Avery, an Episcopal preacher from Cleveland, Ohio, and Darwin R. James, a banker and Congressman from New York City. We have no record of what he said when he spoke to the students, packed into the small auditorium of the school building. Perhaps it was about Grant, who had spent the night at Cumberland Gap, on January 6, 1864, when he was on an inspection tour of the Wilderness Road.

But we do know what immediately followed. General Howard, Mr. Myers, the Episcopal rector, and the New York Congressman were seated on the front porch of the school. Mr. Myers talked. He told of the earnest boys and girls attending his school, of the forgotten and neglected people hidden away in the surrounding hills, of his desire to give them an educational opportunity, which had so long been denied them. His warm brown eyes glowed with a burning fire, and his words kindled a sympathetic flame in the hearts of his listeners.

General Howard could not long remain silent. He rose impulsively, and strode up and down the veranda in a moment of reverie, his empty right sleeve flapping in the breeze. Then he turned to the men, and said: "Gentlemen, I want to tell you a story." His listeners sat enthralled as he told of his last interview with Lincoln. It was as though the Great Emancipator were speaking. Across the way was the face of rugged Pinnacle Mountain, gaunt and gray with the weight of the centuries. Along the face of the mountain was the thin line of the road which reached over into Kentucky and the Great West, which Captain Abraham Lincoln and little Tom had travelled a century before. It was a moment of fulfillment, a final linking of events which were to lead to still mightier consequences.

General Howard at last paused in his recital, and said to Brother Myers:

"If you will make this a larger enterprise, as a memorial to Abraham Lincoln, I will take hold and help."

He was accepting his last assignment from the peerless leader whom he had served so faithfully in the tragic 'sixties.

It is not known whether any audible prayers were said on that occasion, but I know how Brother Myers, in his rejoicing, must have shouted inwardly, and how the hearts of Dr. Avery and Mr. James must have been strangely moved. The four men made a covenant on that historic day with the spirit of Abraham Lincoln, which each of them was to keep until they were called for their final bivouac in eternity. As one whose heart had been touched, lifted and inspired by the results of that covenant, I stand today in humble tribute to those four men who set in motion an educational force which has been a great blessing to humanity.

So it was that the Lincoln heritage had its culmination in the establishment of Lincoln Memorial University. The four men talked over plans for an enlarged Harrow School which should bear the name of Lincoln as a living memorial to the Great Emancipator. Brother

Myers told of an abandoned hotel property nearby, at Harrogate, which he believed he could secure for the new institution. General Howard made arrangements to send his booking agent, Cyrus E. Kehr, an attorney of Chicago, to Harrogate to assist in the details of the larger organization. Promotion work began immediately. Howard continued his lecture tour, but kept in close touch with the men in Harrogate. A charter for the college was drafted, incorporating General Howard's idea. It was signed by the local incorporators, headed by Brother Myers, on February 12, 1897. The primary function of the institution was "to provide education for the children of the humble, common people of America among whom Lincoln was born." The college colors were Blue and Gray. A college flag was adopted, consisting of a golden "L" in a field of white, the "L" standing for "Lincoln, Love, Loyalty, Liberty, and Labor." An abandoned sanatorium on the newly-acquired hotel property, used as the first building, was called "Grant-Lee Hall."

General Howard soon became chairman of the board of the newly-founded institution, and a Confederate veteran in the community, Capt. Robert F. Patterson, who had surrendered with Lee at Appomattox, was elected vice-president of the board. Mr. Kehr, as General Howard's local representative and organizing president, assisted Brother Myers and the local trustees in securing a faculty. The first school work on the new location at Harrogate was begun in the fall of 1899. This was to be the college department, and the Harrow School continued at Cumberland Gap as the academy. Dr. John Hale Larry, a Congregational minister of Providence, Rhode Island, became the first permanent president and took over in the fall of 1899.

The commission which General Howard had received from President Lincoln was at last to be fulfilled. Instead of quiet retirement he was once again plunged into an arduous service comparable to that of any period in his long and active career. This would become his crowning achievement.

I wish it were possible to give in detail the story of General Howard at Cumberland Gap from February 12, 1897, to his death on October 26, 1909. As General Robert E. Lee laid aside the faded gray uniform of a Lost Cause to devote the rest of his life to the youth of the South in perpetuation of the name of Washington, so a Union man gave his "last full measure of devotion" to a similar service in the name of Abraham Lincoln.

It was not my privilege to know General Howard. His service for the college was before my time. But I have revelled in the stories which I have collected from various sources about the kindly, gray-haired, one-armed General who visited with the students, ate with them in the dining hall, talked to them in chapel, and rode on many missions into the surrounding hills. Not long ago I talked with an old man who was the lad who had driven the General to the Cumberland Gap school for his first speech. A few months ago I listened to another man, a rural school teacher trained at Lincoln Memorial University, who accompanied the General on a long horseback ride through the Kentucky hills. Another former student described the dramatic occasions when the old Veteran would inspire the students by his chapel talks, sometimes using the stub of his right arm in forceful gestures. On one occasion the General pulled a small flag from his pocket and waved it triumphantly to illustrate a point in one of his patriotic addresses.

General Howard had one friend in the Harrogate community whom he always visited when he came to the college for official meetings. He and Capt. Robert F. Patterson, the Confederate veteran who became the vice-president of the board, would indulge in many pleasantries as they recalled events of the past when they were fighting on opposite sides. A deep affection grew up between them. Among the Howard papers is a letter from Captain Patterson which reveals the cordial spirit of that rich friendship. Captain Patterson had no particular purpose in writing, except to express his gratitude for what the General was doing for the young people in the Cumberland region. Listen to a part of that letter:

“My dear General:

“I have been thinking for sometime to write you a word of appreciation and encouragement in your undertaking to establish a . . . University in memory of Mr. Lincoln at Cumberland Gap. It is generally estimated that a man’s best work is done on the sunny side of sixty; but if you succeed in this enterprise (as I believe you will) then the shady side of sixty will be to you the harvest time for golden honors. Your life has been a busy one and you have given your best service to your country, but public honors have not blinded you to the intellectual and moral needs of your less fortunate countrymen. . . .

“I cannot imagine a more desirable end to a long and successful life of an old Soldier than to see him still in the saddle, booted and spurred, with sword in hand, battling against ignorance, in-

temperance, and irreligion—enemies more dangerous to our liberty and to the peace of society than any armed foe. It is gratifying also to remember you have undertaken this enterprise with the instincts of a true commander. You have not sent out "Aid" or "Pickett" to report, but you have reconnoitered the field in person, and I cannot see where you would have selected a better position for the University. I believe that Mr. Lincoln himself would take you by the hand and tell you that you could do him no greater honor than to erect a University in his name which would educate the descendants of the old mountain soldiers who left their own state and stood by him for the Union during the Civil War."

But I must turn back to the Lincoln heritage in the Cumberlands, the final culmination of the diverse and unrelated little events which, unified and enlarged, led to vast consequences. Lincoln, talking to a one-armed General; a preacher with a pick, building a church; a covenant of four men sitting on the front porch of a little school; a dream of a great memorial to a martyred President for the service of humanity. Little things, indeed; but from them has come a powerful educational force which has spread throughout the mountain region of the South. Where there has been darkness in the hollows, there has come light. Where there have been poverty, isolation, ignorance, and defeated ambitions, there have come happiness, courage, and hope. At the Lincoln shrine in the Cumberlands many thousands of young people have been touched by a holy fire. Their hearts have been lifted, their horizons extended, their lives enriched and ennobled.

I cannot speak of this without being profoundly moved. My testimony is personal. I go back to the first day when I attended a chapel service, in an old, rambling, temporary auditorium, built in General Howard's day until funds could be secured for a better one. The first thing to attract my attention was a large painting on the wall, back of the lectern on the stage. It showed President Lincoln standing in his study with General Howard, pointing to Cumberland Gap. I soon learned that this was the beginning of the school I was then attending. Nearby, on the wall, was a large plaque containing the last words of Capt. Guy Howard, son of the General, who had been killed in the Philippines in 1901. Bold and impressive were the words: "Whatever happens to me, keep the launch going." Fire long ago destroyed the painting and the words of Guy Howard, when the old building was burned, but not that vivid memory of mine and of thousands of others who met daily in that chapel. Some things are deathless.

It has been forty-one years since General Howard passed from the scene of his labors at Cumberland Gap. But his spirit and his ideals still live. The little institution which he started has grown into a splendid physical plant with beautiful surroundings. More than 500 young men and young women come, each year, for their college training. They pursue liberal arts courses, but they get something more than mere knowledge. They touch the lives of Lincoln, of Howard, and of other great Americans whose careers challenge and inspire. Woven into their lives, consciously and unconsciously, are strong, compelling forces which come from their daily association with a great heritage.

We are proud of that heritage. As we go about our daily work, we are conscious of our responsibility and opportunity. In our present world of confusion and despair, we need something like this to which we may cling. Only through our coming generations can we hope to build a better society. In what better way can we do this, than to exalt the nobility of men like Lincoln, and to perpetuate their principles and philosophies?

If we can impart to our young people something of the greatness, magnanimity, and sublime qualities of our immortal Sixteenth President, and of others like him, we can save a weeping world. In our own small and limited way, that is what we are trying to do with the Lincoln heritage which is entrusted to us at Lincoln Memorial University.

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THE LINCOLN HERITAGE IN THE CUMBERLANDS.



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